

28 June 2006

PARLIAMENTARY BRIEFING ON CHILD DEATHS IN CUSTODY

11.00am Tuesday, 4 July 2006
House of Commons, London SW1

INQUEST is to hold a parliamentary briefing on child deaths in custody at which MPs and peers will call for a public inquiry into the death of Joseph Scholes. Speakers will argue that lessons are not being learned and that five further child deaths point to the urgent need for an inquiry.

The briefing will be chaired by former Chief Inspector of Prisons, Lord Ramsbotham GCB, CBE; and addressed by Joseph's mother, Yvonne Scholes, Deborah Coles, co-director of INQUEST, and Baroness Stern. They will be joined by the families of the children who have died in custody since Joseph Scholes and by Imtiaz Amin, the uncle of Zahid Mubarek. It will be hosted by the Scholes family's constituency MP, Chris Ruane.

It is a year since INQUEST published *In the Care of the State?* by Professor Barry Goldson and Deborah Coles – an authoritative analysis of child deaths in penal custody. Lord Keith's report on the death of Zahid Mubarek which is to be published on 29 June is expected to be sharply critical of institutional racism and the lack of accountability within the prison system. In July, the Court of Appeal will consider legal arguments for the government to act on the recommendation of HM Coroner for a public inquiry into Joseph's death.

INQUEST's co-director Deborah Coles said:

We know from INQUEST's casework that child deaths are too often linked to failings in the community, the inappropriate use of penal custody for vulnerable children, inadequate treatment whilst in custody whereby the institutions are unable to care for the vulnerabilities of those that they detain. Child deaths in custody raise thematic issues that need to be addressed in a joined up manner through a properly resourced inquiry so that appropriate recommendations are made to ensure that lessons are learned and safeguards put in place to protect the lives of children in the future. The public interest case for a judicial inquiry remains urgent and pressing.

INQUEST's leaflet *Why Are Children Dying In Custody?* will be available at the parliamentary briefing, and via our website from 4 July 2006.

Notes to editors:

INQUEST is the only non-governmental organisation in England and Wales that works directly with the families of those who die in custody. It provides an independent free legal and advice service to bereaved people on inquest procedures and their rights in the coroner's courts.

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